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BEGINNINGS

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James O. Handley, Jr.

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CONTEMPORARY NOVEL

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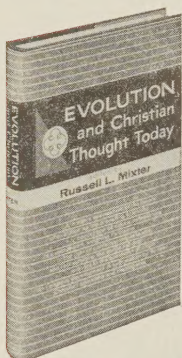
LETTERS

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The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT & OPINION

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JANUARY 1960

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BEGINNINGS

BEFORE THE BEGINNING

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. — John 1:1, 2

Jehovah possessed me [Wisdom] in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth was. — Proverbs 8:22, 23

I write unto you, fathers, because ye know him who is from the beginning. — I John 2:13

These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. — Revelation 3:14

OF THE WORLD

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. — Genesis 1:1

Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I, Jehovah, the first, and with the last, I am he. — Isaiah 41:4

He hath made everything beautiful in its time: also he hath set eternity in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end. — Ecclesiastes 3:11

OF CULTURE

... Men began to multiply on the face of the ground. — Genesis 6:1

... Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. — Genesis 10:8

OF SIN AND EVIL

... The devil sinneth from the beginning. — John 3:8

... The devil. ... He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. — John 8:44

OF GOD'S CARE

... A land which Jehovah thy God careth for: the eyes of Jehovah thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. — Deuteronomy 11:12

And though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end would greatly increase. — Job 8:7

So Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. — Job 42:12

OF GOD'S SELF-DISCLOSURE

O Lord Jehovah, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy strong hand. — Deuteronomy 3:24

I am God, and there is none like me: declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. — Isaiah 46:9, 10

OF RELIGION AND WORSHIP

Then began men to call upon the name of Jehovah. — Genesis 4:26

Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law. — Deuteronomy 1:5

... While he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David. — II Chronicles 34:3

Then Solomon began to build the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem on mount Moriah. — II Chronicles 3:1

Since the people began to bring the oblations into the house of Jehovah, we have eaten and had enough, and have left plenty; for Jehovah hath blessed his people; and that which is left is this great store. — II Chronicles 31:10

Then rose up Zerubbabel ... and Jeshua ... and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem. — Ezra 5:2

OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning. ... — Colossians 1:18

And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. — Luke 24:27

From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. — Matthew 4:17

And again he began to teach by the sea side. — Mark 4:1

And when the sabbath was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished. — Mark 6:2

And he began to speak unto them in parables. — Mark 12:1

This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory. — John 2:11

... He began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. — Luke 12:1

And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and he gave them authority over the unclean spirits. — Mark 6:7

And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them the things that were to happen unto him. — Mark 10:32

Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not. — John 6:64

From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up. — Matthew 16:21

OF RESPONSE TO CHRIST

... He began to say, This generation is an evil generation: it seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah. — Luke 11:29

Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. — Matthew 11:20

And they began to beseech him to depart from their borders. — Mark 5:17

And they began to question among themselves which of them it was that should do this thing. — Luke 22:23

And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began to say unto him every one, Is it I, Lord?
— Matthew 26:22

... The whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works which they had seen.
— Luke 19:37

OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom.
— Psalm 11:10

... As he had made a beginning before, so he would also complete in you this grace. — II Corinthians 8:6

... God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. — II Thessalonians 2:13

... He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ. — Philip-
pians 1:6

Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh? — Galatians 3:3

Beloved, no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. — I John 2:7

... This is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.
— I John 3:11

Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father. — Luke 3:8

... For we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end. — Hebrews 3:14

... This is expedient for you, who were the first to make a beginning a year ago, not only to do, but also to will. But now complete the doing also; that as there was the readiness to will, so there may be the completion also out of your ability. — II Corinthians 8:10, 11

OF THE END

... For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. — Matthew 24:21

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. But all these things are the beginning of travail. — Matthew 24:7, 8

When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us; ... he shall answer and say to you, I know you not whence ye are. — Luke 13:25

Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. — Luke 23:30

For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God: and if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? — I Peter 4:17

But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh. — Luke 21:28

BEYOND ALL TIME

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. — Revelation 22:13

I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. — Revelation 1:8

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.
— Revelation 21:6

Epiphany and the Wise Men

by James O. Handley, Jr.

ON January 6 over thirty-four million professing Christians in America observe in their churches (Episcopal, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox) what is called Epiphany. Like Christmas, this special Christian festival became part of the worship calendar of the undivided church in the fourth century. Epiphany is a word derived from the original language in which the New Testament was written. It means the appearing or showing forth of some great personage. For example, the recent appearance of President Eisenhower in the streets of New Delhi, India, may be called an epiphany. But the Epiphany which the church of the early centuries celebrated and which many churches today celebrate was the first appearance of our Lord to the Gentiles. Matthew has recorded it for us in his story of the wise men.

Unfortunately, as creches, pictures, stories, and carols reflect, this event has almost always been associated with Christmas. The Epiphany, however, must have occurred several months after the presentation of Jesus in the Temple and immediately before the flight into Egypt. Moreover, the early church gave this event such a theological and apologetic significance that Epiphany was appointed as a festival separate from Christmas. The following comment endeavors to point up that significance.

We know very little about the mysterious wise men. We do not know their number, names, country or what happened to them after they saw the Christ-child. Art, literature, and traditions have suggested all sorts of interesting possibilities. Because of the star, some have suggested that the wise men were priests of the astronomical religion of Persia. Usually they are pictured as kings, probably as a result of their gifts and David's prophecy in Psalm 72:10-11. But Matthew has reported all the information about them that is necessary to his purpose.

Upon introducing them, Matthew immediately informs us that they were not Jews, but Gentiles. The Christ-child is manifested not only to shepherds, but also to Gentiles of some importance from the East. In this way Matthew lifts the first advent of our Lord out of a narrow, Jewish setting and places it in one of world-wide prominence. Or, perhaps we could say that he gives immediate universal dimension to the Advent: Jesus Christ has appeared for Gentile as well as Jew. Moreover, the Magi fit very well into Matthew's testimony to fulfillment. By means of the wise men he points

to Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God's Old Testament promises concerning the salvation of the Gentiles or nations (see Isaiah 42:1-4 and Micah 4:1-3). So, at the very beginning of his account, Matthew presents men with a thrilling preview of the future and especially of the climax of history; in the wise men we suddenly behold all the nations coming to the feet of Jesus Christ. To Matthew, then, and the rest of the early church, whose witness he reflected, the first Epiphany of Christ to the Gentiles anticipates His final, universal Epiphany.

Matthew also seems to attribute considerable significance to the wise men's following a star. I think his intent is apologetic, expressing the stand which the early church took in an environment of pagan myth. We must remember that the Jews were not the only people waiting for, and expecting, a Great King who would appear from heaven to heal and secure mankind. There was a divine "preparation" of the Gentile world, too, for the "fullness of time." The myth of a divine king who would deliver creation from its primeval curse had been preserved in the East for millennia, especially by wise men. Century after century they had searched the stars to learn the day of the Great One's epiphany to men.

In those centuries, too, the countless ancient religions had heralded this god and that as the divine king. By heavenly symbols, hymns, mysterious rites, the pagans celebrated the epiphany of Mithras, Osiris, Asshur, Baal, Tammuz, or Nergal. The gods came and went with the passing of generations and civilizations. Then came the age of the great emperors and conquerors from the West: Alexander, Sulla, Pompey, Julius Caesar, Antony, Octavian, etc. They tried to brighten their glory and increase their strength by taking over the epiphany myth of the East. By coins, festivals, symbols, proclamations, each claimed to be the divine king. Their victories and ascents to the throne were celebrated as great epiphanies. "August Son of God," "Restorer of Eternal Light," "Liberator of the People" are some of the grandiose titles by which they advertised their appearances. The promises and claims mounted; so did the disillusionment. No god and no emperor had yet been manifested with the genuine heavenly sign of a star.

Then the sign of the Epiphany of the true God-King appeared in the East—a great, mysterious

star hovering in the heavens. The wise men studied it and followed it. "And lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him."

By the star over the child and the worshipping wise men, Matthew bears witness that Jesus Christ, and He only, is the Great God-Saviour-King to whom millennia of myth had pointed. The Epiphany for which the Gentile world had waited so long has occurred! So Matthew glorifies Jesus Christ over against all gods and emperors who show themselves forth, according to myth, as saviours of men. His Epiphany only is genuine. All others are hoaxes. That is how the early church used the story of the

Magi, as an apologetic to the pagan world. We can and should do the same while various world leaders, labor lords, political systems, and revived Eastern religions claim to be epiphanies of peace, prosperity, and happiness (that is, "salvation") to an easily deceived mankind.

Obviously, an Epiphany festival celebrated in the Spirit would enrich the Christian Reformed Church in her two most vital and inseparable functions: corporate worship and witness. The enlarging intrusion of American business into the whole Advent season is bringing increased confusion, distraction, and fatigue into our Christmas festival. Epiphany would afford us a time for a calmer, more concentrated celebration of the Incarnation, particularly in its broader scope—the manifestation of the Redeemer to all mankind symbolized by the wise men.

Spiritual Frontiers in the Contemporary Novel

by A. James Prins

THE Space Age, the time in which we live, is the latest stage in the development of that world view which is the attitude of empirical science: the depersonalizing, dehumanizing habit of mind, inherited from the seventeenth century, which dominates twentieth-century thought and divorces sensibility from sense, imagination from intellect. This "scientific" approach to knowledge of our world is objective, quantitative, mechanical, technical. The Space Age extends this emphasis through the physical universe—out-ward.

I do not say that flight to the moon is not a subject for poetry. Nor do I say that Literature is uninteresting in man's environment—natural or social or cosmic. But it is the distinguishing characteristic of poetry, drama, and fiction that they focus on what is peculiarly human about the way man experiences his environment, the way he reflectively feels it, enjoys it, is pained by it, morally evaluates it. It matters not a bit that Milton's cosmos in *Paradise Lost* is scientifically inaccurate, that he has the earth at the center of the world: he has the human center right—man encountering God.

Literature is likely to move in a direction opposite to that of Space-Age Science. It probes the depths of man's moral being. It moves not toward the moon but inwardly to the heart and the soul and the spirit of man. These are the terms of poetry,

not of Science; and it is significant that our time is characterized as the Space Age, a phase in the development of material progress, and not as the age of poetry, a phase in the growth of the spirit.

The contemporary novel is no exception to the poetic impulse in Literature. Novelists today—those that count—are not concerned with the science-fiction of rocketry: they are not concerned with reaching the moon. They are concerned, as all great novelists, like Dostoevsky and Melville, have always been, with reaching, to use a poetic figure, the heart of the matter. A Christian critic of the contemporary novel, Mr. William R. Mueller, states in his introduction to *The Prophetic Voice in Modern Fiction*:

Wisdom remains, four hundred years after Calvin's definition, that knowledge of ourselves that convinces us of our sin and that knowledge of God which is our salvation. And it is frequently true that a man may come most directly to knowledge of himself when he sees himself anatomized in a contemporary setting and in an idiom, a language, which is of his own time. The voices of the past few decades which have pierced most decisively to the heart of the matter, penetrating most deeply into the anxieties of our generation and expressing most precisely our fears and hopes, have been those of the literary artists, and it is perhaps above all in

the modern novel that we find the anatomy of our own age drawn with the greatest clarity.

Contemporary novelists are concerned with the problems of the human soul and spirit. These are inner frontiers—not the frontiers of outer space. These are spiritual frontiers.

To exemplify spiritual frontiers in the contemporary novel, I will use Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* and Albert Camus' *The Fall*. Both writers are significant contemporary novelists, and although neither novel is regarded as the author's greatest artistic achievement, each is typical of his thinking—and each is not only written in the theological terms of traditional Christianity but cannot be understood except in a context of Christian doctrine. The two novels have complementary themes.

THE theme of Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* is Love; apropos the condition of modern man, it concerns what Mr. Nathan A. Scott, Jr., in *Modern Literature and the Religious Frontier* calls the "Myth of Sanctity." The central character of the novel is Major Henry Scobie, Deputy Commissioner in the police force of a British-governed town in West Africa during World War II. Though a sincere Catholic, Major Scobie makes what appears to be a mess of his life, because of a corrupting quality he has which Greene calls pity. Scobie is scrupulously just, in the compassionate sense. His immediate superior, the Commissioner, calls him, without irony, "Scobie the Just," a "terrible fellow." Scobie's flaw is an excess of pity: he cannot bear to watch disappointment and suffering in others. Scobie is, from the standpoint of the law, too just—too prone to look into the heart of the matter rather than to regulations, too moved by compassion for human fallibility—to make a good policeman. So when the Commissioner retires, Scobie is passed over for the job. His socially sensitive wife Louise feels humiliated; she begs him to send her away for a holiday. Scobie cannot afford her passage, but, feeling pity and responsibility for his wife, he borrows the money from the only person who will lend it to him, the Syrian Yusef, who is suspected of working against the English cause in the war. Thus Scobie compromises his official integrity, but only in this way can he assume responsibility and take up his wife's burden.

Soon after Mrs. Scobie leaves, Major Scobie assists in rescue operations for the victims of a German torpedo attack. Among the gravely ill is a six-year-old child. As Scobie watches her dying agonies and listens to her cry for her father's presence, he remembers how his own young daugh-

ter had died away from him, and he reflects that "one never really miss[es] a thing. To be human one [has] to drink the cup." Pretending a child's game, Scobie assumes the presence of the father. Sweat breaks out on his brow as he prays, "'Father, give her peace. Take away my peace forever, but give her peace.'" The little girl dies in peace, but Scobie loses his own in deepening pity.

God seems to answer Scobie further in another war victim—another object for pity—a young woman, Helen Rote, who lies beside the six-year-old girl, and lives. The young woman is terribly scarred, physically and mentally, by the horrors of forty days on the torrid sea in an open boat and the loss of her husband. As Scobie views her ugliness and misery, he pities her—and is irresistibly drawn to her need. In offering the human communion that heals her, he later breaks the Seventh Commandment.

Mrs. Scobie returns early. She tries to persuade her husband to go to Mass with her. Scobie knows that she doubts his fidelity—is testing him. In the Roman Catholic faith a person must confess his sins through a mediating priest and receive absolution before he may partake of the Eucharist. Scobie can confess his sins to the priest, but he cannot repent and be absolved. He cannot promise God to grieve his mistress by denying her his company, nor can he grieve his wife by not partaking of the Communion, thus proving to her his infidelity. He chooses to eat at the Lord's Table with mortal sin on his soul; he desecrates the sacrament.

The paradox of Major Scobie's situation is that apparently every sin he commits is motivated by a tender heart. Finally, in guilty remorse for the death of a son-like servant who dies as a consequence of his compassionate dilemma, Scobie doubly damns himself in suicide, believing that by taking his own life he will cause the least pain to those he loves most. He carefully fakes a heart attack to spare his wife and mistress mental agony—and to give Mrs. Scobie financial security.

There are perhaps two corrupting aspects of Scobie's love, if it be truly love: he loves only that which is ugly or suffering, that which is in need of love, pity, compassion; and he has a kind of arrogant pride in carrying the whole responsibility for the world's suffering on his shoulders:

He had no responsibility toward the beautiful and the graceful and the intelligent [he thinks to himself]. They could find their own way. It was the face for which nobody would go out of his way. . . the face . . . used to rebuffs and indifference, that demanded his allegiance.

Wherever there is a burden of pain, Scobie feels guilt—he must take up the burden like a cross.

His thought at one point is that doing so is like the love of God, of Christ. Scobie is willing to die for love, to relieve the pain of another. He goes further, for in loving man he damns himself by breaking God's commandments, not loving God above all. As he takes the bread of the Communion, he echoes the wish of Paul in Romans 9:3. He prays, "'O God, I offer up my damnation to you. Take it. Use it for them.'" His last words are, "'Dear God, I love'"

For Scobie, the heart of the matter is that one must give up his own peace for the peace of others. He believes he has forfeited eternal peace in taking the Communion in mortal sin, and in taking his life—or giving it. Has he? The heart of the matter is a complex spiritual problem. Greene gives the last word to God. At the close of the story, Mrs. Scobie rather self-righteously asserts to Father Rank the futility of hope for her husband's soul—to which judgment the priest furiously answers, "'For goodness' sake, Mrs. Scobie, don't imagine you—or I—know a thing about God's mercy!'" Mrs. Scobie protests that "'the Church says. . .'"—and Father Rank replies, "'I know what the Church says. The Church knows all the rules. But it does not know what goes on in a single human heart.'"

The Heart of the Matter explores a complex spiritual frontier, the paradoxical mysteries of love, pity, compassion in the human heart, the human limits of Christ-like love.

THE theme of Camus' *The Fall* is Guilt; apropos modern man's estate, it falls into Mr. Scott's category of "Myth of Hell." Guilt is related to love in that it is the inferno of the soul which is a consequence of not loving.

The Fall is a monologue delivered by a onetime Paris lawyer, Jean Baptiste Clemence, who calls himself a "judge-penitent"—a monologue delivered to a silent drinking companion in the "Mexico City" bar, Amsterdam. The novel strongly reminds one of the mariner and the wedding-guest of Coleridge's famous poem. The canal structure of Amsterdam is meant to suggest the concentric circles of Dante's Hell and symbolize the inferno of the soul to which the narrator has fallen. His recital is a confession of guilt.

Once, he tells his listener, he had lived blissfully in a kind of Eden of moral ignorance and complacency, one of the most respected lawyers in Paris, the protector of widows and orphans, in his own estimation. He had been at the height of his powers, successful, innocently happy, assured of his own righteousness and virtue—until one night he failed to risk his life to save the life of another; even more, he had failed to risk his life for the

soul of another: he had failed to plunge into the icy waters of the Seine to save a desperate young girl from suicide. He had failed in a sacrificial encounter with human misery. Thereafter, he is plagued by an unidentifiable laugh that follows him everywhere, the ironic laughter of self-judgment. He confesses to his silent listener,

I have to admit it. . . . I, I, I is the refrain of my whole life, which could be heard in everything I said. . . . When I was concerned with others, I was so out of pure condescension, in utter freedom, and all the credit went to me: my self-esteem would go up a degree.

Clemence's "fall" was a conviction of guilt, the discovery that his actions belied his motives, that the appearance of his outer-social self bore no relationship to the reality of his inner-spiritual self. "Modesty helped me to shine, humility to conquer, and virtue to oppress."

Clemence's further discoveries about himself are even more ironic and shattering to his pride. He rips off more layers of duplicity. He continues to his silent listener—who is also his own soul:

After all I have told you, what do you think developed? An aversion to myself? Come, it was especially with others that I was fed up. . . . The prosecution of others . . . went on constantly, in my heart.

The truth is that the whole purpose of Clemence's recital of confession is selfish—to gain from his listener a recognition of the listener's common involvement in human guilt, and thereby shift the burden of guilt from Clemence. Clemence tells his story so that he can accuse as well as confess. There takes place in his recitation a gradual shift from "I" am guilty to "we" are guilty. He says:

This, alas, is what I am! . . . But at the same time the portrait I hold out to my contemporaries becomes a mirror. I stand before all humanity recapitulating my shames without losing sight of the effect I am producing, and saying, "I was the lowest of the low." Then imperceptibly I pass from the "I" to the "we." When I get to "this is what we are," the trick has been played and I can tell them off. I am like them, to be sure; we are in the soup together. . . . The more I accuse myself, the more I have the right to judge you. Even better, I provoke you into judging yourself, and that relieves me of that much of the burden.

With satisfaction, Clemence states: "I am for any theory that refuses to grant man innocence and for any practice that treats him as guilty."

Thus Clemence relentlessly pursues himself farther and farther into the pit—into the hell of self-knowledge; and therefore he ironically calls himself a "judge-penitent."

I have but skimmed the surface of *The Fall*. The novel is rich in Christian allusions: the title, of course; and the narrator's name, Jean Baptiste Clemence, which suggests, perhaps, a modern John the Baptist, crying (*clamans*) in the wilderness of his guilt for the mercy (*clemence*) of Christ, who must have felt, asserts the narrator, the guilt of complicity in the slaughter of the innocents by Herod. *The Fall* is so thoroughly dramatized in the ironic consciousness of Clemence that it is difficult to know the exact emphasis Camus meant. Does the novel mirror the hypocrisy of pious self-righteousness, or does it mirror the destructive effects of obsessive guilt feelings, the human limits of Christ-like assumption of guilt? Both, I think; but my aim here is to suggest, rather than to interpret or judge, particular novels. *The Fall* is another human dilemma of the soul. What is significant is that it probes the conscience of our time, a spiritual frontier.

LOVE and guilt, responsibility and the conscience of man: these are spiritual frontiers in the contemporary novel — if we accept Greene and Camus as representatives of the contemporary novel, and *The Heart of the Matter* and *The Fall* as representative of Greene and Camus. At least they are here to be read, with many more; and it seems to me that probing these spiritual frontiers is more urgent today than shooting the moon — or should I say, *especially* important at a time when the same

rocket that probes the frontiers of space can, *and is intended to*, drive a hydrogen bomb to impersonal slaughter thousands of miles away. The mental and material resources of the nation expended on this "intention" would make good subject-matter for a sermon on the text of I John 3:14-16, a subtle problem of the Christian conscience more likely, ironically, to be explored in the pages of a contemporary novel than from the pulpit.

In *Pious and Secular America*, Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr says of the Christian faith that "it declares that God is love and that His love is the final source of harmony for men who know that they ought to love one another but who really love themselves." The Christian faith, Dr. Niebuhr continues, "is the answer to [man's] predicament and becomes meaningless if the predicament is not known." In probing the conscience of man, the contemporary novelist is making the predicament known. Mr. Mueller, with whom I much agree and to whom I am greatly indebted for certain ideas in this paper, puts the point well: "The novelist will not save us, but he may well bring us to the knowledge that we are in need of salvation." Mr. Stanley Hopper in *The Crisis of Faith* says it even more pertinently: "Poetry [and Greene and Camus are poets] will not save the world. But poetry can force the soul into the precincts of its last evasion."

Discovery in the spiritual frontiers is for the poet-novelist; decision for the individual Christian.

THY WORD IS TRUTH: A comment by Charles Hodge

The proposition, "Thy word is truth," is a very wide one. By the word of God is meant, or may be meant,

1. Any revelation of God. A word is a revelation. It is an outward manifestation of thought. Anything, therefore, by which God reveals himself, his purposes, or any fact, is his word. In this sense the whole creation is an outspoken word of God. It reveals him. And all that it makes known of him, of his ways, his character, will or purposes is truth. It accords exactly with what God is, and what it legitimately teaches concerning him may, therefore, be relied upon with implicit confidence.

The external world is not a phantasm, an empty show. It is not delusive, but is what it reveals itself to be, and never disappoints those who rely upon its teachings.

The foundation of this reality, the reason why the world, as the word of God, is thus real and reliable, is because it is his word. It must be studied as his word.

2. By the word of God is often meant in the Scriptures, any particular declaration, whether a promise, a threatening, or revelation of what is, or is to be.

3. It means the revelation concerning God and divine things contained in the Scriptures. In that sense the

proposition "Thy word is truth" is equivalent to, the Scriptures are true; all they teach concerning God, man, his character and state, his relation to God, concerning the person and work of Christ, the plan of salvation the future life, and the future state of the Church, is true. Everything conforms to what is real. Everything may be confidently relied upon. Nothing will ever disappoint legitimate expectation. Those who assume the Scriptures to be true and act upon them will attain the end they promise. Those who assume that what they teach is false and act accordingly, will find their mistake.

Now, 1. It is an unspeakable blessing to know what is truth, and where it may be found. This is the great pursuit. Men seek it here and there, but it is found only in God and his word, in all the sense mentioned.

2. It is also an unspeakable blessing not only to know where truth may be found, but to have it made accessible to us. If we seek it ourselves in reason, in consciousness, in the wisdom and teaching of men, the history of the race, we shall be disappointed. All who seek truth elsewhere than in the word of God (and especially the Scriptures) will and must be in doubt, darkness and error. — Taken from PRINCETON SERMONS

A Lion Without*

by John Timmerman

A college student is, of course, immune to no temptation, but his favored position makes him particularly vulnerable to the sin of sloth. Evidently even the Hebrews liked to loaf. Solomon tersely warns them that slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep, that the slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, that the slothful man is brother to him that is a waster, and that the desire of the slothful man killeth him. Solomon's targets may be sitting before me.

Sloth is laziness. The slothful student is the perennial gold-bricker, the genteel idler purring her way through college, the relaxed epicurean, taking a motto from Omar Khayyam, "an hour we have, ah let us waste it well." He is the potential *A* student gracefully subsiding into *B*'s, the potential *B* student comfortably accepting *C*'s, the solid *D* student content to be himself. He is a waster, squandering not only money, but his most precious possession, his time, which is his life. Sloth is sin.

Sloth has myriad manifestations. There are the inveterate sleepers blinking their way into class and dozing after their arrival. Some sleep in the library; some sleep here. There are the dreamers, lost in pointless reverie, getting an A.B. in fantasy. There are the tireless babblers who measure their lives in coffee spoons. There are the academic armadillos thoroughly armored against the uncomfortable impact of new ideas. Sloth turns on W.M.A.X. and tries to read Thoreau on sounds. Sloth more than anything else turns in the dishevelled mosaic of jarring syntax, doleful spelling, wandering modifiers, shoddy diction, and assorted howlers some students justifiably call their blue books. Sloth is a deadly sin.

I am talking about the waste of time. I am not arguing asceticism, or pleading for pale bibliomaniacs. I am strongly in favor of intelligent discussion, legitimate diversion, and animated romance. I am simply saying that the first business of a college student is study, that the normal amount of study the faculty recommends is thirty hours a week, and that a significant invasion of that quota is sloth. Sloth in this context is intellectual laziness.

The ancient Israelite whom Solomon is reprimanding is troubled with a conscience. He knows he is slothful; he offers a powerful excuse. There is a lion without. Now he is no Samson, no swordsman, no lion-tamer. So the only thing he can do is to hug his hearth. He wants no mournful

obituary in the *Gaza Post*. No, he will wait for the *National Guard*.

But is there really a lion in the street? Or is this Israelite an honest neurotic imagining lions? Or is he just a liar?

Sometimes the slothful student is just a liar. He deliberately invents lions without; he malingers illnesses, he fakes the unobtainability of books and the necessary missing of classes. Such a student should be rebuked. Sometimes the slothful student is genuinely neurotic. He feels inadequate, he imagines grudges against him. He has real headaches. Such a student should be helped. Sometimes there is a lion in the street. The subject matter is difficult, the outside reading is laborious, athletics may interfere with his studies, his sweetheart may demand too much of his time. This student must get out and fight. The Calvin variety of the *National Guard*, the counselling service, cannot help him. Not to fight here is spiritual sloth.

There are indeed lions in the streets of life. One does not travel this life without risk and battle. "Into many a green valley falls the appalling snow." Job said it long ago: yet man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward. Sometimes the targets are down and there seems to be nothing to shoot at. The life of a student requires moral heroism. Wincing at difficulties, dodging assignments, currying special consideration, seeking shoulders to sob on causes as many failures as mental incompetence. Often the only way is through. Retreat is the Beatnik way, bewailing the cruel edge of things, giving up moral questions in despair, writing ragged English—puff without powder—parade without performance—culminating in the poetic masterpiece called "Howl." What a travesty on man! I prefer Hemingway's godless heroes—at least they never whine. I greatly prefer the prayerful courage of the Christian who dares great things with the help of his Lord. I know that Browning sounds too cheerful for this iron age. Our poets specialize in images of despair, but Browning hit a noble note in his final poem written in the last year of his life.

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,

Never doubted clouds would break,

Never dreamed though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,

Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better, Sleep to wake.

The words of the wise are as goads says Solomon. Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings.

* A chapel talk.

A Dutch Teacher Views American Education

by Roel Bijkerk

Grand Rapids, January, 1960

DEAR JAN,

I'LL do what you asked of me and give you some of my views on education in the USA. You must remember, however, that my family and I have been in this extraordinary country only about sixteen months, and that I am not at all an expert on educational matters. But some of my impressions have grown more definite, and so let me try to sort out and organize those that seem to be most important in a Dutchman's views on American education.

Well, Jan, the first, really overpowering, impression is that the American way is vastly different from our Dutch way of educating children! The difference lies not only in outward characteristics such as types of schools, organizations, financing, etc., but also in underlying philosophy and in general atmosphere. As an interested observer-participant I came here and gaped in wonder at the evident newness and the spectacular differentness of the schools. The deeper-lying principles are much less clear, and they still present much of a mystery to me (and not only to the outsider, it seems); it is on this point of principles, however vague they still are for me, that my wondering *at* begins to be intermixed with wonder *about* American education. But I will try first to describe some of the more outward characteristics that have impressed themselves upon me.

(1) *Uniformity of types of schools.* Compared to Holland, with its confusing variety of secondary schools for liberal education or vocational training, and with its great number of different professional schools, the American school system is simple: there is the grade school, and after that the high school, college, and university. These all operate on the basis of credit-accumulation by the student.

(2) *Freedom on the high-school level, regimentation on the college level.* Having collected a certain number of credits, the student is taken to have completed his high-school or college education. If he fails in a particular subject, he simply takes that subject again (or he takes another subject), and so he gradually accumulates the required number of credits for graduation. Our system of progressing from grade to grade, with the basic criterion being *over-all, comprehensive* performance, forcing the student to pass in *all* the subjects

of a particular grade or having to repeat all the subjects, is unknown here. Consequently there is nothing comparable to our anxieties around Christmas time and in June: will Jantje make the grade or has he lost a year? The uniformity of types of schools also relieves the parents of the difficulty of having to make a choice for their child as to the particular type of secondary or professional school the child may be fitted for—with all the social and economic consequences involved of having completed this school and not that one, and therefore of having this diploma and not that one, and the like.

No, things are definitely simpler here: your child goes to grade school, then to high school, and then quite possibly to college. He (or the parent) selects the courses, and he then accumulates credits. Yes, already in high school the student has quite some freedom of choice of subjects! That is quite different from our secondary-school regimentation, is it not? And the American student does not have to study so many different subjects at the same time: five or six perhaps in a school year, certainly not our twelve to eighteen prescribed subjects! Furthermore, there are many non-academic subjects taught here, for which credit is given (music, sports, home economics, etc.).

At the college level, however, not much is found of what we in Holland know as the "freedom of higher learning." The college student here has to attend his classes; he is given several tests during the semester, and he takes a final exam, in each subject. The dates for tests and exams are scheduled by the instructor and/or the administration of the college. The student also is supervised in such things as the locality of the room he wants to rent, his spare-time activities, and in his general behavior. Even his student organizations are sponsored and watched over (and often even partly directed or coached) by instructors.

Imagine any of this at a Dutch university! Do you remember the rumpus started in 1956 in all the Dutch universities when the Minister of Education proposed for one particular university a mild restriction of the student's right to postpone the examination in a particular subject until such a time as the student feels he is ready for the exam? What was that proposal again? "Seven

years at the university without passing *any* examination shall be reason to put the student on probation for two years," or something to that effect. And the Minister did not get anywhere. Have there been any other attempts lately to restrict academic freedom? I suppose not.

The students here in the USA would certainly be elated if they gained a little of that academic freedom. However, the tendency seems to be in the opposite direction here—more and more regulation, and especially more and more counseling and control in non-academic and even in purely personal aspects of the student's life. I think that our Dutch students could certainly profit from some of this. On the other hand, they at least know full well that they themselves are responsible for success or failure, for behaving or misbehaving; and they know that they have to bear the consequences. The student here in America—at least at the college level—is held rather *un*responsible, which may at times become a nice disguise for *ir*responsibility.

(3) *Variety of activities, directed by the school.* At the high school, and certainly at the college, a very large number of subjects is taught: academic subjects, but also—and even more so, perhaps—non-academic subjects. I'll restrict myself to the college, because I have experience in that type of school only. The usual academic subjects are taught: theology, philosophy, natural and social sciences, languages, etc. But next to these are all kinds of courses in education, art, music, and physical education.

Where we in Holland try to create different types of training institutions for the different professions, here in the USA the school becomes all things to all men and women! Whether you want to become a scientist, an industrialist, a teacher, an artist, or a social worker, you go to college! College, consequently, is much more than an "institution for higher learning." As a matter of fact, the emphasis in so far as the public "image" of the school is concerned, is rather more on the non-academic than the academic! You can read a lot about schools in your newspaper or magazine. But that is mostly in connection with sports. When you say, "University of Michigan," the first association—created by the newspapers—is: "One of the Big Ten." Big Ten of what? you wonder. Of football and basketball! (Football is a game played mostly with hands, arms, and body. Once in a great while the ball is indeed kicked. Real football is called "soccer" here. It is not well-known in this country, although it is gaining a little in popularity now; and that is because some *colleges* are now beginning to make it a regular part of their

sports program!). These sports are really *directed* by the school, and they are carried on complete with managers, coaches, scouts, bonuses (called scholarships), and the like. The sports are not organized and developed by the student themselves, as in the Netherlands. As a matter of fact, the public prestige of a school is in part—if not largely—determined by that school's success in the realm of physical prowess! (which, by the way, is a realm of pretty big business too). Another striking thing is that every school with any self-respect has at least a choir, an orchestra, and a band, and these give many performances during the regular school year. The participating student can get credit for this too.

Well, Jan, there are so many of these seemingly *extra-curricular*, but *in fact* very much *intra-curricular*, things that it is impossible for me to mention more than a few. But I want to point out several to finish this point. Suppose some students want to start a club of some kind (sports, debate, art, study club—any club). That's all right, provided they find a sponsor and present an acceptable program to the school's administrators. This sponsor is a faculty member. The instructors therefore have more contact, and in other ways than teaching in their particular field, with the students than is true in Holland. Which is something I rather like. One more thing in this context of regimentation at college: the student is counseled, evaluated, and kept under general surveillance by several agencies, in which again faculty members engage themselves (committee on student activities, recreation, discipline, etc.). To sum it up: the college is, among other things, also concerned with learning. The same seems to be true for the high school. That is the *factual* impression you receive, when you look at things from the outside.

Naturally you now start wondering about the quantity and quality of the learning the student gains during his stay in school. Well, that differs much from one school to another. There are some minimum academic requirements, imposed by the government; but these are very much a *minimum*, and it is really up to the school whether it is a good place for learning or a poor one. Here again is a very striking difference in comparison to the extensive over-all control by the government of academic performance in the schools in Holland. I was very much impressed by the personality and ability of the faculty members in Calvin College, where I am teaching. And they are really *teachers*. But, handicaps of the rather heavy teaching load and of the various assignments to committees is, I think, that it is almost impossible for the regular college instructor to engage in *creative* scholarship,

for which he was trained and in which he is interested. He simply does not have the time to retire to his study to ponder at length some academic problem. These considerations bring me to another facet of American education, one that struck me vividly:

(4) *The scholastic, social, and economic status of the teaching profession.* Do you remember, Jan, the survey that was taken in Holland some years ago, in which people were asked to rank in importance to society a number of professions, such as judge, minister, lawyer, professor, the military, government office, etc.? As I recall it, the "professor" led the field by some length. Well, that is different here, I think. The professor of a college or university is not a member of the "upper class," not in social prestige and certainly not in economic status! On the average he earns (and seems to be taken to deserve) an income in the lower middle-class bracket; and socially he is just another individual who didn't quite make good, like most people.

Scholastically he is not too "select" either. (Scholarship as such is not as respected here as in Holland, it seems). For instance, here you can *plan* on becoming a college teacher; it is nothing very extraordinary. Imagine telling your friends in the Netherlands that you intend to become a professor at a university! No, we Dutch seem to be rather old-fashioned in our reverence for "learning," expressed in our awe for the university and its representatives. As I mentioned before, the college professor here is a *teacher*: he has to teach a course and he has to rate the student many times in many ways. He is not primarily, as he is in the Netherlands, a scholar, expected to increase the specific knowledge in a particular field of learning.

The over-all prestige of the teaching profession is, however, increasing, I understand. But, it seems to me, this is so because it has become evident—especially since Sputnik—that learning is a prerequisite for the successful application of science in making a strong, healthy, and prosperous country. The concept of the great intrinsic value of purely academic scientific pursuit, apart from any direct applicability, seems to be a European concept, not an American one. There is in the USA at present a great concern for education, and an increasing recognition of its importance as the backbone of

a nation's personality and possibilities; but the emphasis is on immediate practical returns. I do not think that there is one other country in the world in which the word "egghead" could have been coined, with all its connotations of funny eccentricity and lack of normal, healthy adjustment to life.

This topic of the teacher's status could easily induce me to elaborate further; but this letter should not become too long, and so let us go on to the next point.

(5) *Expensiveness of education in America.* Wanting an advanced education for your child really requires some financial sacrifices by the American parent, and very especially so if he contemplates an education in a private school of his denomination! Since we gained in the Netherlands full social and political recognition of the private school, and consequently receive vast amounts of government support for our private schools, we have become luxuriously used to inexpensive education of every kind for our children, Jan! You begin to realize this, when you see that here in the USA all private schools have to be financed completely through private enterprise. The parents cannot even deduct from their income tax for it, I understand! Yet the private schools grow and expand here more and more. This is surely a thing I have come to respect deeply. The people do not only make use of the facilities for the education of their children in the spirit of their convictions—they work hard for it too!

A curious thing in this connection is that many people do not *want* government support for the private school. This is because of the danger of strings being attached, I gather. It is interesting to note that we have become so used to our government's strings that we do not even feel them as strings any more. Perhaps wrongly? I really do not know. It would be an interesting point for further discussion!

Well, Jan, these are some of my impressions of American education. This letter is already so long that I shall give you in another letter next month some of my views and impressions of the principles and philosophy underlying this great country's way of educating its children.

Regards,

ROEL BIJKERK

Is Anybody Listening?

by J. J. Lamberts

THIS article is being written to teachers or writers or editors or pastors who have become involved in the business of communicating ideas and attitudes to people, in contrast to those who have involved themselves in dispensing services or commodities.

It is not unusual for us who teach or preach to be misunderstood, since other people assume that we merely talk or write. Transferring an idea from one head to another appears on the whole to be an operation far less complex than selling a Chevrolet or transferring the contents of a six-room house from Syracuse to Minneapolis, or removing a diseased kidney. Inevitably we hear the remark: "You know you've got it easy; talk half an hour or an hour, or write a few pages, and that's it. You're done." We know better, of course. Talk is more than pushing air through the larynx and writing is more than mere pressure on typewriter keys. A sermon, a lecture, an article, a classroom preparation—each of these demands hours of lonely study and concentrated thinking. And they demand a long apprenticeship.

And nevertheless most of us are likely to overestimate our effectiveness. Perhaps no one knows better than we do that all people are not about to beat down doors to hear us. Some people do not go to church; some do not read books or newspapers or magazines; many do not go to high school or to college. We survive because there are no general rules, because there are some persons who from habit or conviction or curiosity attend public worship in church or keep their magazine subscriptions paid up or enroll in college. Here our illusion takes over, the notion, namely, that we have been deputized to make certain statements, whereupon the responsibility suddenly becomes someone else's.

Since there is no way of checking how effective we are, we are enabled to maintain our self-respect. A Chevrolet gets sold or the customer goes out and buys a Volvo; the furniture gets moved to Minneapolis or gets wrecked on the Indiana Toll Road: the kidney operation is a success or the patient goes into a uremic coma and dies. These are things one can check. The editor on the other hand stops at the desk of the circulation manager to ask how renewal subscriptions are holding up, and if the mailing list shows a modest weekly or monthly increase he feels that he is being read. He is even more encouraged by those who meet him at the

club or on the street and tell him that they enjoyed this or that article, and his heart leaps up when he beholds his desk overflowing with mail commenting on an article — favorably is splendid, but unfavorably will do, as long as there is comment. Pure, transcendent bliss is attained when readers ask for reprints. Certainly anyone who has written an article knows what it means.

A clergyman can tell precisely how many people he has reached. He can count them. If he is a stickler for accuracy he may omit several middle-aged men who kept dozing and had to be jabbed awake by their wives' elbows. After the service he stands at the door or in the narthex and one by one the members of his congregation greet him. Many of them clasp his hand warmly and say, "That was a wonderful sermon, Doctor." He assumes quite naturally that anyone who has listened closely enough to discern the merits of the sermon must also have apprehended what he was trying to say.

OVER against the naive faith of the editor or writer or clergyman, the teacher is inclined to feel rather smug. Such smugness is justifiable, as it would seem, for teachers do give examinations and these are designed to measure, among other matters, the effectiveness of the teacher himself. At any rate we assume that they will do this. Those of us who are teachers may find ourselves confronted with a variety of problems whenever we compose tests or examinations. First, we find it easier to test a knowledge of facts than to test a development of attitudes. Second, we ask ourselves questions most of our students will be able to answer and when the median and the mean coincide we congratulate ourselves on having put together a "fair" examination. Are we supposed to be teaching merely facts? Any fool can memorize facts, as the recent television quiz shows demonstrated. What one does with the facts makes all the difference in the world. All of our important scientific discoveries involved data which people had had for a long time. Galileo was not the first person who ever dropped things off the top of the Tower of Pisa, and people had watched apples fall out of trees a good while before Newton was born, and hundreds of people had looked at birds in the Galapagos Islands before Darwin appeared. But just how would any of us teachers have devised a test which could distinguish the subtle essence

which made the perception of Galileo or Newton or Darwin superior to that of any yeoman or sawyer or swineherd?

Just a few years ago Dr. Philip E. Jacob published his *Changing Values in College*, a study which has done many of us a lot of good. If we are to be honest with ourselves we shall find ourselves in pretty much the same position as the editors and writers and clergymen. We sanctify our enterprise with marking curves and other quasi-mathematical hocus pocus, just as editors operate with circulation figures and clergymen with attendance records or totals of new communicants.

The central problem is the matter of communication. Within recent years there has been a tremendous amount of research within this area. Much of it is significant but there is also a good deal of flim-flam. About a dozen years ago, Dr. Rudolph Flesch breezed into the scene with his *Art of Plain Talk*, in which he offered a "difficulty score" by which a writer could determine how readable he was. We have no conception of the number of books and magazines and newspapers which have been watered down to a kind of imbecilic vapidness since this formula was proclaimed. Yet people are not noticeably better informed.

Suppose we formulate the problem of communication. We can set up a kind of sentence frame and drop auxiliary verbs into the blank space. The sentence: "I am speaking [or writing]; . . . people understand?"

THE first auxiliary verb is *will*. "I am speaking; will anyone understand?" Most of us are at this point. In fact, this can be put even more bluntly: "I am speaking [or writing]; will people listen [or read]?" It is the practical problem of keeping an audience from going away. We use "come-ons" of one kind or another and they are easy to legitimize. The clergyman announces his sermon topic on an illuminated bulletin board and he has a modest display space in the Saturday-afternoon edition of the newspaper. If he can be aphoristic in identifying the topic, so much the better. Once he has them in the pews he can cudgel or cajole them into listening, which is to say, he can yell and pound the lectern and do many other feats that will keep the eardrums supple; otherwise he can beguile them with little stories or apt illustrations. The idea is to get them to listen. Even this is a nominal gain and we ought not scorn it. I commented to one of my friends of the cloth some time ago that many pastors are essentially apostate through sheer dullness, a sin which can perhaps be forgiven, though it can only be excused with great difficulty. Editors are great ones for changing the layout of their publication or they

add pictures in the expectation that the picture they select will be worth a thousand words. That depends on the picture and on the words. They return articles to the writers with instructions to "liven this a little." We teachers go through our lectures year after year, getting up new reading lists, picking out new textbooks. We take roll conspicuously and hint that more than so many cuts will cause trouble.

There must be people whose mere presence at a lecture or a sermon means that they will listen, or who do not pick up a book or magazine except to read it intelligently. There are not many of them.

WITH this inauspicious beginning, suppose we advance another step and try another auxiliary verb: "I am speaking; *do* people understand?" This places more of a burden on the person who is communicating, but we may possibly have been a little too sanguine about communication. A block from my house is a busy intersection at which there used to be a good many accidents. The police decided to prohibit left turns there about three years ago and put up some twenty signs which read: "No Left Turn." Instead of the conventional green lights there are directional arrows which point only straight ahead or to the right. Nevertheless it is a safe bet that within ten minutes someone will attempt or actually negotiate a left turn there.

Reading or hearing means more than simply being able to repeat the words. We expect that people will somehow alter their pattern of behavior as a result of what they have read or heard. When a driver sees the words "No Left Turn" and then turns left just the same, we may assume that this particular reading experience has been unsuccessful. Some years ago I was teaching a methods course and I spent some time discussing the futility of a particular bit of instruction. A few months afterwards I met a student who had been an earnest participant in the discussions. He was now a full-time teacher. I recall feeling a helpless dismay when he detailed for me how he was following this procedure I had scored as useless, and not only that, but he had somehow managed to endow it with an even greater degree of inanity, thus guaranteeing even more outrageous futility. He was an unsuccessful hearer.

After Moses came down from Mount Sinai and after he had denounced the people for worshipping a golden calf, a number of the Israelites undoubtedly said to each other, "Did it occur to you that that was what Yahweh meant by 'worshipping graven images?'"

During the Middle Ages there arose a kind of teaching we call "catechetical," by which a student simply memorized formulated answers to formu-

lated questions, as a result of which master and pupil could carry on a fairly long exchange in which the only thing actually communicated was a demonstration of the student's ability to memorize totally meaningless material. A perceptive clergyman or editor or educator senses the trap with the "do they understand" label on it. There is a great abyss between telling people and having them understand.

AS though this were not enough, another auxiliary verb is possible: "I am speaking [or writing]; *can* they understand?" It is not a question of getting people within range so that the physical act of communication may be accomplished, and neither is it speaking or writing with sufficient clarity that the hearer or reader will be able to interpret what we are saying. The mere fact of the "otherness" of our listener or reader is at the root of our trouble.

First of all, of course, we realize that language is a manipulation of certain conventional symbols. The ancient Greeks used to get horribly mixed up because they thought there was a real connection between words and things. We call a horse *horse* because this enables us to be understood by those about us. A German calls it *Pferd* and a Frenchman *cheval* and a Spaniard *caballo*. These noises symbolized by the letters spell *horse*, *Pferd*, *cheval*, and *caballo* are not the real horse either. There is always a tendency to confuse the thing and its symbol. The ancient worship of idols was a typical form of this. This has its equivalents today, many of them not particularly subtle at all. To be more specific would be to engender strife.

One of the complaints often levelled at the American diplomatic service is the failure of ambassadors and other embassy personnel to know intimately the language of the country in which they are working. It is much easier to have the other people learn English. This is characteristic of people in other areas too. At a college or university we insist on having people conditioned by the use of certain symbolic conduct. Communication proceeds more easily where there is a kind of homogeneity, where people recognize the same symbols. As a result we are tempted to pour them into a kind of mold before working with them. One of the dangers I see in parochial schools is the kind of ethnocentricity they are likely to produce. When young people are taught the symbols and the ethnically preferred response to them, this is not learning.

Another difficulty which men like Knox and Calvin must have sensed in their desire to have an educated clergy, was the imperative need for an educated laity as well. I am not sure that a dis-

inction between clergy and laity is Biblical, but that is beside the present point. The gap between being educated and semi-educated or completely illiterate is not a real gap. But in innumerable instances it is symbolic of social distinctions. And where these are manifest the flow of communication becomes seriously impeded. We think of channels of communication as operating in all directions. They rarely do. They operate most easily on the same social level. That is to say, I as a professor do not communicate to my students nearly as immediately as the students communicate to one another. This is one reason I provoke discussion whenever possible. There is flow up and down too. But where this occurs, the bow is usually upward. Is it true, as some communications specialists suggest, that all of us are endeavoring to impress our betters? If this is so, then there is reason to wonder how effectively we have managed to sever communication between ourselves and the people with very meager education. Possibly there is no real communication at all.

Another difficulty we find is symbolic conduct. There are accepted ways for clergymen and editors and educators to behave, especially in public. This may vary a great deal from place to place. Much of it consists of certain stereotypes. Many years ago my father received a white necktie in the mail from an anonymous member of his congregation. This was evidently one of the older members of the church who remembered older pastors who had worn white neckties and supposed that the Word was preached better when the pastor's tie was white. We merely have to ask ourselves what a pastor or teacher would need to do to make him seem less a pastor or teacher in our eyes to realize how this symbolic conduct stands between us and the communication.

Another aspect of the various symbols I have mentioned is the emotional blocks they are capable of setting up in a listener or reader. Throughout the foregoing paragraphs are half a dozen or more items which were placed there with utmost deliberateness. They were booby traps. They were intended to make the reader suspicious and to say in effect, "This fellow isn't one of 'our people.'" The danger does not lie in getting entangled in falsehood so much as it does in being unable to distinguish truth in unfamiliar clothes.

It was really not very long ago that I became aware of something many Christians have apprehended, that a creed is not something that a person says but something one confesses. For this reason it was up to me to experience each article of the creed, and experience it I must. This did not mean taking the articles one by one and trying

to get them down somehow. You remember the passage from *Through the Looking Glass*:

"I can't believe that," said Alice.

"Can't you?" the Queen said in a pitying tone.

"Try again; draw a long breath and shut your eyes."

Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said; "one can't believe impossible things."

"I dare say you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I've

believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

This isn't the way it works. One finds them out by experience. There is a sense of discovery in the realization: "I believe in the communion of the saints," for instance. Once having discovered this, I find I am able to communicate with people my dogmatism would have excluded otherwise. I no longer have to be defensive about it. You see, it is impossible to communicate anything you feel defensive about.

A Dutch Voice on Inspiration

by Leonard Sweetman, Jr.

The question of the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture is one that is being discussed not only in the Christian Reformed Church but also in many other churches, including the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands. Undoubtedly we in the Christian Reformed Church can enrich our own discussion if we try to learn from what other Christians in other churches are saying.

In the summer of 1958, following the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, Dr. R. Schippers, Professor of New Testament at the Free University in Amsterdam, wrote four articles in *Belijden en Beleven* on the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture. Prof. Schippers wrote as a Reformed scholar of the New Testament, as one who through the testimony of the Spirit recognizes and confesses that the Scriptures which form one book, come from God; he wrote as a student of the Scriptures who listens, obediently, to the Scriptures.

It is well, I think, that we are aware of what Prof. Schippers wrote, for if we do not wish to see the authority and normative character of the Scriptures weakened, we must take seriously the givens of the Scriptures themselves, and what we say about the Scriptures must be said as a result of listening, obediently, to them. It is my purpose here to summarize Prof. Schippers' articles, the first two of them in this issue of the *Journal* and the last two in the following issue.

IN his first article, "The Infallible Word," Prof. Schippers bases his belief in and confession of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures on "the ground that dogmatics has [used] for centuries; namely, that of the Scriptures' own witness." He distinguishes infallibility as such from the concomitant belief in and confession of it, on the one hand, and systematic theology's formulation relative to it,

on the other hand. Prof. Schippers refers to Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, I, 389, where Bavinck states the necessity of listening to what the Scriptures themselves tell us. This listening is done through painstaking study. "What we must always long for in faith," says Prof. Schippers, "is that the Scriptures themselves shall explain and make clear through the facts that which we must understand relative to their inspiration." In listening to the Scriptures in this fashion our concern is not *that* the Scriptures are inspired. That the Scriptures come to us from God is the content of the Holy Spirit's testimony. We are here concerned to know in as detailed a fashion as possible *how*, in fact, the Holy Spirit has inspired the Scriptures.

In listening to the Scriptures we are faced, inevitably, with the problem of historical reliability, that is, trustworthiness in the area of historical details. We cannot affix the stamp of inerrancy upon historical details without further elaboration of what that means. As Bavinck pointed out, the first task of the people of God is not to defend the dogmatic formulations of a particular era. To do so is to invalidate a cardinal principle of the Reformation: "... The Church and 'believing' science, too, do not exercise rule over the Word of God. On the contrary, the Word of God exercises rule over our entire life; over our dogmatic formulations too."

If we examine the phenomena of the Scriptures in the area of historical reliability from the perspective that has been sketched, our results will not be destructive of the authority of the Scriptures nor of their essential trustworthiness. Rather, our results will point out — to express the matter in radical human terms — "what the Holy Spirit Him-

self regards as allowable in this situation." Prof. Schippers gives two illustrations of his point. The first is a comparison between Mark 2:26 and I Samuel 21:1-9. Both references concern David's eating the Bread of the Presence during his flight from King Saul. In Mark, Abiathar is said to have been the High Priest at this time, whereas I Samuel refers to Ahimelech the Priest. The second illustration is that "according to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke . . . Jesus' death . . . took place on the 15th of Nisan; according to the Gospel of John, Jesus died on the 14th of Nisan."

These problems which are involved in serious Biblical investigations ought not to shake one's faith, however, since the Church has been aware of their presence throughout her history. And, as Bavinck said, "Jesus and the apostles, Athanasius and Augustine, Thomas and Bonaventura, Luther and Calvin, and all Christians from all Churches in all ages have confessed and received [these] Scriptures as the Word of God."

THIS leads Prof. Schippers to discuss the question concerning the divorce between form and content which seems to inhere in his position. This he does in his second article, entitled "Every Scripture Inspired by God." He begins this article by quoting a remark of Bavinck: "Even though a book about geography, for example, were to be inspired completely and entirely, and dictated in the most literal sense of the word, it would not, thereby, be *theopneustos* [divinely inspired] in the sense of II Timothy 3:16." (*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, I, 414). In this context Bavinck stated that inspiration, as such, does not make a writing God's Word in the Scriptural sense. "The Scriptures are the Word of God because in them the Holy Spirit witnesses to Christ, because they have the incarnate Word as their material and content." This, Prof. Schippers equates, essentially, with what the Reformed Ecumenical Synod said, reformulated by Prof. Schippers, to read: "The Scriptures are infallible with reference to that which God wishes to reveal to us through them."

Prof. Schippers states his position in this manner precisely because he wishes to avoid divorcing the content of the Scriptures from the form in which they come to us. He, following Bavinck, insists that the Scriptures *are* the Word of God; they do not merely *contain* the Word of God. This means that one may never divorce form from content, or vice versa, in one's investigations of the Scriptures. "We *can*, however, divorce them (but this we must emphatically reject), if we act as though inspiration were concerned in the first place

with vehemently declaring, without further elaboration, that the historical statements found in the Scriptures are infallibly correct." Bavinck's statement, quoted above, is made more concrete by the citation of two Biblical phenomena: the genealogy found in Matthew 1, and the stories of the Temple's purification by Jesus found in Matthew 21, Luke 19, and John 2.

The Matthean genealogy is divided into three sections: Abraham to David, David to Jechoniah, Jechoniah to Jesus. The genealogy closes with the statement: "So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations." When we count the groups of names listed in this genealogy, however, we are faced with a problem. Beginning with Abraham, we count fourteen generations, David being the fourteenth. In the second group, we begin with Solomon and count fourteen generations. This time, Jechoniah is included as the fourteenth. In counting the third group of fourteen, however, we run into trouble. Proceeding as we did in the second group, we begin with Jechoniah's successor and heir, Shealtiel. This, however, leaves us with only thirteen in the last group, not fourteen. We have two groups of fourteen and one of thirteen if we count the way we learned to count in school; however, "the Word of the Scripture in Matthew 1:17, which was inspired by God, counts differently. The divine inspiration pays attention to matters quite different from those with which the arithmetic book is concerned."

Again, the evangelist revises the historical givens found in the Old Testament as he records this genealogy. Prof. Grosheide says that the author deviates (*afwijkt*) "from what the Scripture teaches. . . . He has reformed the genealogy intentionally for the purpose of a specific declaration (*prediking*). Of course, the case in point here is verse 8 in which Matthew states that Joram begat Uzziah, whereas II Kings 8:25 declares Joram's son and follower to be Ahaziah. Furthermore, the names of Joash, Amaziah and Johoiakim are missing entirely from the Matthean genealogy. "Why? For the purpose 'of obtaining a symmetrical genealogy,' as another New Testament scholar in the Reformed tradition, Prof. Ridderbos, writes. In so doing, once more, the evangelist had a special purpose."

Turning to the accounts of the Purification of the Temple, it is noted that John places the incident at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, whereas the Synoptics place it at the conclusion of Jesus'

life. Were there, therefore, two purifications? John, as most scholars agree, did not arrange his material chronologically; he used a topical order. Prof. Grosheide is of the opinion that the Purification of the Temple is used as a counterpart to the Wedding in Cana. In this place, John introduces two signs: the miracle performed at the Wedding in Cana reflects faith on the part of Jesus' disciples, whereas the Purification of the Temple reflects unbelief on the part of the Jews.

Relative to the sets of fourteen generations and the Purification of the Temple, "we must say, certainly, that they are infallible with reference to what God desires to declare to us in them. Otherwise, we would touch up (*betuttelen*) these places

in a scholastic fashion on the basis of our idea of how the Scriptures must be infallible."

IN a succeeding article I hope to sketch the last two studies Prof. Schippers wrote. In these studies Mr. Schippers deals with the problems involved in the Synoptic Gospels. These studies help us to understand his statements regarding the inerrancy of the Scriptures: (1) the Scriptures are infallible with reference to what God desires to declare to us in them; and (2) in the discussion of the diverse Biblical statements that are of an historical and scientific character, it is very important that we refrain from affixing the stamp of infallibility on these statements without further elaboration.

Willem Greve

by J. G. Vanden Bosch

FOR one belonging to a denomination that in the course of a century grew from four small churches to five hundred it is a matter of unfailing interest to learn whence its early members came and what kind of people they and their leaders were. Like many denominations in America, the Christian Reformed Church owns a foreign origin. Though the main source was Holland, a minor source was Germany, not the Germany of Kant, or Hegel, or Goethe, or even of Luther, but the Germany where the truths promulgated by Calvin took root, more particularly the earldoms skirting its western border, one of which is popularly known as the Graafschap. Partly because of their nearness to Holland, it was here that the Secession of 1834 found ready adherents, and it was from these sections that several stalwarts of the Reformed faith came, such as Dr. Steffens, Dr. Vos, and Dr. Beuker, and that the Christian Reformed Church received some of its early leaders. One of the first to be so recognized was Willem Greve.

It is often said that autobiographies generally are violations of the ninth command, because only what is good in the author's life is recorded and what is bad is omitted. Some things of which he is ashamed are not mentioned. There are but few Rousseaus who frankly and unashamedly portray their own vices. Because this was also his view, the Rev. Mr. Greve refused to write the story of his life, but shortly before his death he relented. To satisfy his many friends and acquaintances, he supplied his friend, Rev. E. Breen, with the more

important facts of his life and permitted these to be published.

WILLEM Greve was born at Bentheim, a city of the German earldom bearing the same name, January 10, 1836. Originally the name seems to have been Graebe, but through the unintentional error of a Dutch minister Graebe became Greve and the corrupted spelling prevailed. His parents were humble folk, who sent him to a school with the Bible and saw to it that their son had the advantage of a good moral training. Willem was a serious boy and had religious impressions already in his youth. At an early age he stored his memory with the catechism and verses from Scripture without experiencing the truth of his memorizations. Yet he realized the presence in his life of something that made him feel lonely among his companions. Ever since his seventeenth year he wrestled with the problem of his salvation, trying hard by self-improvement to make himself acceptable with God. Exhausted by his own efforts, he finally sought refuge in the righteousness of Christ, and, having found peace of soul, he experienced days of untold happiness.

During this period he owed much of his spiritual development to Rev. J. B. Sunday, leader of the Secession in the Graafschap Bentheim, to whom he had been introduced by a friend who lived in Groningen. He no longer felt at home in his old spiritual environment and was derided by his former companions. He felt that he had swung

out of their orbit. Soon the desire to be a gospel preacher ripened in his soul. He was encouraged by the Rev. Sundag and Rev. Beuker to present himself before classis to study at its expense, but the choice of another competitor for this privilege frustrated his desire. Thus five or six years of patient waiting ended in disappointment and he began to think of going to America, that wonderland where dreams came true. He went, and settled in Cincinnati.

Willem Greve arrived in Cincinnati some time during the year 1865, when the city, though small compared with its present size, counted many New Englanders among its population who brought with them their cultural ideals so that the city was an outpost of a flourishing New England culture. It was a center of much cultural activity. Educational institutions were founded and periodicals of a cultural and literary character were published there.

Hollanders had settled in Cincinnati some years before the exodus from Holland under Van Raalte, Scholte, and others began. Most of them were adherents of the Secession of 1834 and met for purposes of worship in a Baptist church. Seemingly the helpfulness of the Baptists influenced them to be organized as a Baptist congregation. They invited a certain Jakobus De Rooy of Holland to be their pastor, who soon discovered that he could not subscribe to characteristic Baptist tenets and resigned. Later he became pastor of the Christian Reformed church at Oostburg, Wisconsin. The group then called Rev. G. J. Raidt of the Netherlands, under whose leadership a provisional union with the Presbyterian Church was effected in the year 1857. A period of peace ensued, but did not last. Scarcely had the Civil War come to a close when a little ecclesiastical war broke out which resulted in a schism, one faction remaining loyal to the Rev. Raidt and the other bidding farewell to the Presbyterian communion. In the latter group Willem Greve was a leader, and for a period of eleven months in recognition of his ability he served this independent body as its lay preacher.

In 1867 Greve was present at a meeting of the General Assembly (Synod) of the Christian Reformed Church, petitioning that body to organize a congregation at Cincinnati. The request was granted so that in the fall of that same year a Christian Reformed church was duly constituted by Rev. K. Vanden Bosch and Rev. D. J. Vander Werp. Living in a new continent had not erased from his soul the desire to be an ordained minister of the gospel. An opportunity to be trained for that sacred office came from Lane Theological Seminary, a Presbyterian institution, at Cincinnati, which offered him free tuition and one hundred

dollars to be spent for books. But Greve did not avail himself of the offer. Instead, he presented himself at the meeting of the General Assembly already mentioned, was accepted, and by his classis was sent to Graafschap, Michigan, to be a disciple of Rev. D. J. Vander Werp. Though he was elected one of the three elders of the newly organized church, his acceptance as a student prevented his serving as such.

Greve finished his studies in 1869. The need was so urgent that two years of preparation were considered sufficient. The year 1869 was a memorable one in the annals of the young denomination. The previous year one candidate, J. Schepers, and that year three candidates, J. Stadt, J. Noordewier, and W. Greve, were admitted to the ministry, and the following year another one, L. Rietdyk, would be. Thus in a comparatively short time five men were ordained. The number of congregations had grown from four to eighteen and the number of ministers from one to eleven. It was, therefore, a time when the founders of the denomination had reason to be encouraged and, trusting in God's blessing, confidently to look forward to greater achievements.

SIX congregations were privileged to enjoy the ministrations of Rev. Wm. Greve: Cincinnati, First Chicago, Passaic, Borculo, Grandville Avenue in Grand Rapids, and Hull, Iowa. It is a tribute to the character and the ability of the man that the Reformed Hollanders of Cincinnati among whom he had lived and whose congregation he had served as exhorter should desire the new candidate as their pastor. He accepted the call, and, though generally a prophet is not without honor save in his own country, he labored here to the satisfaction of the congregation for as long as five years. Another witness to the good reputation of the Rev. Greve as preacher and pastor was the fact that he served Cincinnati twice, as also he did First Chicago, so that the opinion generally held that a second pastorate in the same congregation is considered undesirable was proved to have its exceptions. Again, Greve shepherded only two churches in Michigan, the total duration of these pastorates in this state being only six years. The other twenty-eight years in the sacred ministry were spent in churches found in the outer reaches of far-flung Christian Reformed territory.

The Grandville Avenue pastorate which lasted from 1893 to 1896 was brought to a close by his emeritation caused by ill health, but a year of rest in the peaceful village of Zeeland restored to him

the vitality needed to assume the responsibility of another charge. Hull, Iowa, called him. For six years he was able to minister to the spiritual needs of his flock, when illness again forced him to ask for his emeritation. It was asthma that undermined his powers. He chose Pella, Iowa, as the place of his abode, but, the climate not agreeing with him, he moved to Chicago, where he liked to be, and spent the years still allotted to him in this city as a member of First Englewood, Rev. L. Van Dellen being his pastor. Here he enjoyed freedom from the care of a congregation and occupied pulpits as often as his health permitted. Only, asthma continued to enfeeble his strength, especially during the last few months of his life. His acute suffering often made him despondent, but in the last few days of his existence there came to him freedom from suffering and blissful calm. He died in the month of March, 1906, at the age of seventy, leaving his wife to mourn his decease. Rev. K. Poppen, Rev. L. Van Dellen, Rev. E. Breen, who delivered the funeral address, and Rev. K. Kuiper officiated at his funeral.

THE smoothly shaven stocky Greve had every appearance of being of German origin. Already approaching the thirties when he chose America as his home, he remained a German from top to toe, showing traits of his German inheritance in many ways. Blessed with a strong clear voice and a fluent manner of speaking, he was an acceptable pulpiteer and even as a student drew large audiences. As one might expect of a man whose limited and practical training was received in the early years of the denomination, his sermons were eminently practical and dealt with salvation as experienced. But experience, he insisted, should never be divorced from a sound Scriptural basis. As the public taste for expository preaching developed, preachers who stressed the subjective aspect of the truths of salvation lost some of their popularity. Unlike his Cincinnati friend, Rev. L. Rietdyk, Greve was not an influential figure in the councils of the church. His contribution to the denomination was that of one who loved to proclaim the doctrine of saving grace and to do the work of a pastor faithfully. And these are matters that count for very much in the life of a church.

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

SIRS:

I read with considerable interest the speech of Dr. S. J. Vander Weele in the September *Reformed Journal*, entitled "Nicodemus and Education," and in view of the importance of the subject with which it deals, would like to make some comment on it. I find myself in agreement with Mr. Vander Weele's thesis that we all need to learn to subject our traditions and habits of thought to critical scrutiny and, where necessary, to revision or discard. Yet, as I study his speech I cannot help but observe that its lively style covers some very fallacious reasoning and I am convinced that its thesis, unless it is qualified rather radically, must make matters worse instead of bringing about the improvement he desires.

To say that we need to learn to criticize our traditions may be to state a truth, but to tack this thesis on to the story of Nicodemus appears to be singularly unfair to and to overlook the much more important point which that whole Biblical incident makes. Even a casual reading of that story makes it perfectly plain that Jesus did not

enter into discussion with Nicodemus merely to point out to him that this conservative Jewish teacher needed to have his fixed ideas thoroughly shaken up — to add a little poetry to his science — or, in Mr. Vander Weele's words, to learn that "mere theological statement is mute and silent until it is expressed in the poetry of grace." Jesus did not tell him: Unless you conservative old Pharisees learn to be more appreciative of the ideas of the young liberal Sadducees, with their Hellenistic culture and their anti-supernatural intellectualism, you shall not inherit the Kingdom of God! The Lord showed no concern whatever for that. He pointed Nicodemus to something this speech completely ignores — his need for spiritual rebirth.

Mr. Vander Weele's treatment of the story makes the Lord say in effect what He did not say, and completely overlooks the all-important thing that He did say! This becomes the more apparent when in application of his point, presumably drawn from the Nicodemus incident, he observes that "we must recognize . . . that life is complex, that many problems cannot be faced

in terms of white and black, but rather in terms of varying shades of gray." While this statement may be true, it ought to be observed that Christ's point in His dealing with Nicodemus, far from stating this, stresses the very opposite side of the matter — one which needs and gets little attention at present. A more "black and white" kind of distinction than that introduced by the Lord's categorical "Ye must be born again!" would be hard to imagine. And if we are to make any sense out of the relative distinctions, the varying shades of gray with which life confronts us, we must make it by having a clear view of the blacks and whites of God's revelation, only in terms of which the shades of gray have any real significance. Failure to reckon with that is, I fear, responsible for the gray fog of confusion in which a large part of our lives seems to be lived.

When next we turn to the new ideas which Mr. Vander Weele suggests as examples of the kind we should welcome, we cannot help but notice the singular coincidence that they turn out to be exactly a list of proposals recently advanced by *Journal* writers. Then, we note with interest, Mr. Vander Weele presents as the alternative to

welcoming these new ideas, that we "keep on in the old ways" — as though that were the only and obvious choice! Quite apart from the question whether these ideas merit our interest or welcome — many of them are old in the history of denominations that have abandoned their Christian testimony — one wonders how all this is to be connected with Jesus' warning to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born anew."

The writer goes on to plead for conviction, for "men and women of determination and sound principle," but to the end leaves out of account the all-important question on what the students whose traditions are to be shaken up are to base their new convictions. And that, it seems to me, is the most significant feature of the article. It is disturbing that in this, as in more recent writing and talk in our church circles, the plea for change, for becoming "progressive" is completely divorced from consideration of a standard by which we are to judge what progress is.

Merely to plead for the shake-up and re-evaluation or discarding of tradition without presenting a method by which a proper evaluation of tradition can be reached will do no good — it may in fact do more harm. An argument such as that of this article may with perfectly good reason be taken — although the writer, of course,

does not intend it so — as an argument for welcoming every kind of old or new attack on the Christian faith that Christendom confronts today. I recall a church service in which the preacher made the observation, "There was a time when we tried to keep heretics out of the church. Today we welcome them, because we know that the heresy of one generation is the progress of the next." This article does not go so far, but its line of argument constitutes a perfect plea for this kind of "progress," in which most of the larger denominations are merely a bit ahead of us. The writer may reply, "I did not have that type of progress in mind." Then the question must be asked, "How are we to distinguish the kind of progress being advocated in the article, from the other kind which is nothing but the destruction of the Christian faith?" That is the question that has not been and must be faced.

The problem in our churches, as this article points out, is that too many of us have been traditionalists, accepting our beliefs only because we have been taught them without bothering to question on what reasons they were based. Now a reaction is setting in toward an "anti-traditionalism." What much too often neither side in the resulting debates seems to have given adequate recognition is that the Reformed faith is not merely a traditionalism or an anti-traditionalism, but it was and is an effort to return to and to build upon the explicit revelation of God. Luther and Calvin, for example, were not traditionalists. They introduced some very radical reforms; but they did this not merely because they were opposed to traditions. If that had been all they were doing they would have been in the same class as, and contributed no more than, a Servetus. Both of these men called for a return to the Word of God as the Divine standard given us to introduce us to Christ and to show us what His gospel is and what the Christian and the church should be and become. While Mr. Vander Weele does allude in passing to the use of the means of grace, there is in his article nothing of a clear reference to the Word of God as the criterion by which we are to judge traditions. Quite significant of the drift in the thinking in our church in this respect is the fact that

the complete credibility of that Word is itself coming under attack as one of our outworn traditions.

Jesus does not attack the traditionalism of the Pharisees because it was unreasonable or because it was not up-to-date. The point of His criticism is, "Ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition" (Matt. 15:6). "Ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he sent, him ye believe not. Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life" (John 5:38-40). The Sadducees who wanted to break with prevailing Jewish beliefs in the interests of a rationalistic accommodation to prevailing Greek ideas fare no better at Jesus' hands. When they come to Him with their carefully contrived "problems" to show up the untenability of the naive old orthodoxy, Jesus neatly demolishes their argument with essentially the same criticism that He directed against the Pharisees, "Is it not for this cause that ye err, that ye know not the scriptures, nor the power of God?" (Mark 12:24). Unless we come to live by this Biblical standard which our Lord so insistently maintained, we are likely to find ourselves in either the class of the conservative but unconverted Pharisees, or that of the liberal but also unconverted Sadducees, perhaps arguing as bitterly and futilely as they did, but as truly lost as both of them were.

PETER DE JONG

Seattle, Wash.

REPLY TO REV. DE JONG

SIRS:

It pleases me that Rev. De Jong found my recent article substantial enough to warrant his detailed comment. I also appreciate the fine spirit of his letter.

Our areas of agreement, it seems, are considerable. However, Rev. De Jong seems to object to especially two things: (1) the fact that I concern myself with incidental facets of the Jesus-Nicodemus encounter instead of the heart of it, namely, the injunction to faith and repentance; and (2) the nature of the articles that have been appearing in the *Reformed Journal*,



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articles on which I commented favorably in my chapel talk.

To the first objection, I invoke what is surely a time-honored precedent, and one which I have learned from my theological peers. From them, admittedly through practice rather than theory, I have come to assume that, provided one does not distort the essential thrust of a Biblical passage or episode, he may legitimately choose to emphasize this or that phase of it. I have heard the story of Naaman used, for example, as a challenge to youth to emulate the courage and zeal of the Israelitish girl who said to her mistress: "Would God my lord were with the prophet in Samaria; for he would recover him of his leprosy" (II Kings 5:3). I have also observed this story used as a starting point for a sermon on avarice — the sin exemplified in the deceit of Gehazi. Yet, the central thrust of this story is that Naaman, despite a strong temptation to do otherwise, finally accepted in faith God's prescription for his cure. I did something similar with the Nicodemus story. I had before me an audience of Christian folk, many of them teachers in our Christian schools. Assuming, as I am convinced I could, that these were fellow believers, I used the episode, it is true, for other than strictly evangelical purposes. I have in other times and places treated the evangelical injunction. Rev. De Jong is pushing my treatment of this narrative farther than the strictures I set forth in my talk warrant. What I did say seems not to be in question; what I left unsaid is what Rev. De Jong objects to. But obviously one cannot say everything in a chapel talk, and I did not try to do so. With many of Rev. De Jong's additional points I have no disagreement.

As for the second of Rev. De Jong's objections, namely, his disagreements with *Reformed Journal* articles, he will have to settle matters with the authors of these articles and the *Reformed Journal*. It is true that I find myself in substantial though not entire agreement with what has been said in these articles. Rev. De Jong regards them as avenues which may lead to apostasy. On the other hand, I have no hesitation in testifying that, as a group, these discussions have raised my understanding of these subjects to a higher level, and that they have deep-

ened my religious commitment and strengthened my spiritual affirmations. Rev. De Jong finds them unpalatable and unhealthy innovations. They seem to me, on the other hand, evidences of the working of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. They seem to me fulfillments of the Spirit's assurance that He will lead the Church of Christ progressively to a fuller understanding of the mysteries of redemption. If we were Catholics, the Pope would decide the matter. But we are Protestants, and we ourselves are enjoined to wrestle with and to agonize about such problems as these. In my talk I was simply pleading for a maturity which would not reject outright a suggestion proposed by a responsible church leader just because it is novel. And the experience of Nicodemus, in terms of what happened pedagogically — his static conservatism, his willingness nevertheless to subject his formulations to the scrutiny of Christ, his initial bafflement and painful resistance, and his subsequent reward of enriched comprehension of the mysteries of the faith — still, it seems to me, illustrate the point admirably.

Fraternally,

STEVE J. VAN DER WEELE

SIRS:

Is the infallibility of the Bible a delimited one, confined to the "plateau of faith and morals"? The Rev. Leonard Verduin maintains this in the November *Reformed Journal*. We invite interested readers to join in another look at his article.

He seeks to draw arguments for delimited infallibility from Articles II-VII of the Belgic Confession.

Art. II clearly speaks of the *limitation of special revelation* without direct reference to infallibility. But full, not limited, infallibility is implied in the expression, "His holy and divine Word," that is, unmarred by any misstatement.

Art. III points us to the *design* of God's special revelation, i.e., God's care for us and our salvation. That is why men "spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." Unless the Holy Spirit is the Author of error, does that not imply full infallibility, standing, as we do, on the basis of verbal inspiration?

Art. IV declares the inerrancy of the canonical books of the Bible, "against which nothing can be alleged." Does

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this not point to a full, by no means a delimited, infallibility?

Art. V shows us the beautiful dignity and use of the Scriptures. They are "from God" and Christians are "believing without any doubt all things contained in them." Surely, the "all things" points away from delimited infallibility!

Art. VI sets before us the *limited value* of the apocryphal books. From that Rev. Verduin seeks an argument for the *delimited infallibility* of Scripture. Does not the argument here seem extremely far-fetched?

Art. VII points us to the whole Word of God and declares that its doctrine is *most perfect and complete in all respects*. Here the church confesses that it rejects whatever does not agree with this *infallible* rule.

Does the esteemed brother really find delimited infallibility in these passages, or does he *bring* it there?

From the Confession the writer turns to Psalm 19 and pictures it as having two plateaus, that of general revelation and that of special revelation (that of faith and morals). Of the latter he exclaims: "Here all its excellencies lie, all its distinguishing features, also that of infallibility." Does that imply doubt or denial of the infallibility of Psalm 19:1-6? If not, what can he mean?

He also turns to II Timothy 3:16 to prove delimited infallibility. Paul declares: "All scripture is God-breathed," yet Rev. Verduin calls it "very bad exegetical form" to apply this to "every plateau." Calvin says here: "This is the first clause, that we owe to the scripture the same reverence that we owe to God; because it has proceeded from him alone, and has nothing belonging to man mixed with it." Is Calvin here in "very bad exegetical form," or might it be Rev. Verduin?

Apparently assuming that the case for delimited infallibility is established and declaring that it is the time-

honored position of the church, the writer boldly says "with emphasis" that the "burden of proof" is on those who differ, though it be Synod which introduces the "innovation."

But has he really convinced us that the church's historic stand, and our right stand, is one of delimited infallibility? If not, does not the burden of proof still rest with him?

He adds another point, bluntly telling us what kind of proof we need to maintain unlimited infallibility; we will need as strong an argument for insisting on the unlimited inerrancy of the inspired Word of our All-knowing, All-holy God as a Catholic would need for insisting on the unlimited inerrancy of the pope — a fallible mortal!

C. HOLTROP

Lake City, Michigan

REPLY

It is unthinkable for me that my friend and colleague from Lake City, or any other Reformed thinker, is in basic disagreement with the thrust of my article. He also believes, I am sure, that the assignment which the Holy Spirit gave Himself when He led "holy men of old to write" was to convey information on a certain theme, the theme of "faith and morals." That which men could know, and should know, and would know on other plateaus than the plateau of "faith and morals" is indeed due to the same Revealer — but comes through an *other* channel and is the result of an *other* assignment.

The traditional view of infallibility, whether in the Catholic tradition or in ours, has a delimiting phrase in it because the traditional view of the Oracle has this selfsame delimiting phrase built into it. Such is the thrust of my argument in the article to which Rev. Holtrop reverts.

If he will re-read my article with this clearly in mind, then my reasoning will no longer seem "extremely far-fetched" to him. He will then see that the Articles from the Belgic Confession, and the Bible passages also, quoted by me, do indeed speak of the Scriptures as a communication on the plateau of faith and morals.

And I hope that Rev. Holtrop will then agree that, since the Revealing Spirit has imposed a delimitation upon Himself when He led those who wrote the Bible, we do well, also when we speak of that Bible's infallibility, to keep in mind this self-imposed delimitation.

LEONARD VERDUIN

Ann Arbor, Michigan

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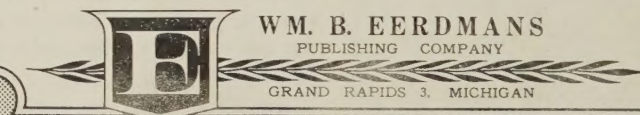
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